4th UPDATE to ALL PARENTS/TEACHERS/STUDENTS (13th Sept 2013)

Following on from the Technology Working Party’s announcement in the last update that our recommended improvement to the current Sacred Heart Parish School education technology tools is to proceed with the implementation of iPads at the start of 2014, we have been working on the many, varied & complex issues of maximizing the Education Benefits while minimizing the Implementation Issues / Logistics / Hardships.

Education Research & Planning

Much of the Education Research was already undertaken as part of the “Research & Review Stage”, however there is now a sub-committee working on the best apps, tools & methods to use the iPads so they are integrated into, rather than take over the current curriculum.

The early planning is that students will use them at various times throughout the day, across all curriculum areas, from English to Art. In planning we remember that it is another tool alongside pencils, pens, paper and other forms of technology.

As part of the “Research Stage” some of the working party & some teachers have already participated in external and in-house professional development and now that we are moving forward more development and training will be scheduled next term and in the years to come. Essentially it will be ongoing just as it is for other curriculum and support areas.

Research across the Education Industry has highlighted an important environmental development that we should all remember in trying to give our children the best advantages possible, that being:

This is possibly the first time in history where our younger generation has greater ease and expertise with the core tools used throughout society than older generations. Moving the focus from teacher led instruction to student centered learning empowers students to use technology to explore, create and innovate with technology.

Reports from Neighbouring Schools

Throughout our “Research Stage” we asked for the feedback from Bayside and Peninsula schools, which include St Joseph’s Sorrento, St. Joseph’s Black Rock, St Thomas Moore Mt Eliza, Our Lady Of Fatima Rosebud and Our Lady of Assumption Cheltenham, on their implementations of iPads, following is just some of the feedback we received:

- “Our school started with bank of 32 iPads but is now moving to a 1:1 program in 2014. The reasons being that the shared option limits what students can produce, and how creative they can be. Teachers also observed that when students individually use an iPad there was an increase in student engagement with their learning”.

- “The ease of use by both students and teachers was great. It also adds another level of use of technology in the school”. 
“There is no time wasted waiting for laptops to start. Students are very focused on their learning. 1:1 has been great - no sharing, no waiting. Students are very responsible. Students are sharing their learning with their parents at home and are very excited about what they are doing.”

“iPads are used in so many ways. One powerful way is sharing learning at home. That is filming a presentation at school, taking photos of learning and sharing at home; digital portfolios, pages and keynote are great for this. The dictionary and Bible apps are amazing as is iMovie.”

Finally our own experience after the Prep trial was that when teachers were observing the students their engagement levels were high, one teacher said: “They were too busy to be distracted. The apps used were very educational. Students kept an ongoing journal of all their learning’s. It is a useable devise for all ages. Teachers can conduct regular formative assessment to determine student skills and academic needs. I originally thought eight to ten in a class would be great but after using them for three weeks 1:1, I wouldn’t have it any other way. They are a device not made for group or paired use.”

Ongoing Education & Research Planning

While we can’t hope to list all the issues/items we are working on in these short updates, the major items currently being reviewed by this sub-committee are:

- Parent’s issue with managing devices at home.
- Control of the amount of apps. Initially looking at focusing on 4 or 5.
- Continued education of cyber safety targeting all forms of social networking.
- Parent education and support sessions offered where necessary.

Implementation Planning

For various reasons (outlined above) in the Education Research and Planning notes (mostly the experience of others), we believe a pool of shared iPads just would not work and in fact would result in poor implementation and an under utilisation of the technology tool. This, in turn, would result in an uneconomical return on investment dollars.

Thus we are moving forward on planning to introduce iPads across all year levels on a 1:1 basis commencing in 2014.

There are an incredible number of implementation issues that we are currently working through, but the major items we will report on are:

Cost & Funding

We are looking at all the ways that we can reduce the upfront cost to parents including but not limited to options like;

- The school leasing the iPads and then adding a cost to the curriculum levy
- The option to pay out the residual at the end of the lease
- Parents, who prefer to, be able to purchase the iPad(s) outright.
- Some funding being contributed from existing or future P&F Funds towards the MDM System.

These and a range of other possibilities are being investigated & worked through.

Security, Updates, Maintenance & Support

These are incredibly important issues, at present we are investigating the purchase of an MDM (Mobile Device Management) System. The benefits of such a system include enabling the school to configure and update iPad settings, secure the iPads, roll out and sync new Apps all via WiFi so it happens as the iPads enter the school grounds. Even at this early stage of investigation we feel the need to protect against security vulnerabilities is critical.

Many Thanks for your interest in reading this update
Sacred Heart Technology Working Party